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Subject: allAfrica.com: Nigeria: PDP Crisis - Obasanjo Asks Jonathan to Forget 2015 (Page 5 of 6)

Nigeria: PDP Crisis - Obasanjo Asks Jonathan to Forget 2015

Before his sudden sack last week, Ashiru was seen by many as one of the ministers the president trusted in terms of service delivery in his administration. But he was believed to have been nominated by Obasanjo. Now that the former president has fallen apart with Jonathan he could no longer be trusted. It was learnt that he was sacked over fear of where his loyalty might be in the effort to actualize Jonathan's 2015 ambition.

The ministers were caught off-guard, as was Inuwa Abdul-Kadir whom Jonathan had earlier removed as Minister of Youth Development on Monday August 26 while he (Abdul-Kadir) was on official duties in Calabar, Cross River State. Abdul-Kadir was ostensibly removed over a crisis arising from the election of Yakubu Shendam as president of the National Youth Council of Nigeria. Some members of the Council believed to be pro-Jonathan were said to have vehemently rejected Shendam's appointment. But the minister stood his ground.

The recent sack of the nine ministers has, however, been according further speculations to Abdul-Kadir's removal. The former minister, sources said, is a political ally of Sokoto State Governor, Aliyu Wamakko, also a key leader of the nPDP. And although many people might have foreseen, speculated and predicted a cabinet reshuffle, the manner of the announcement of the sack and the political leanings of the affected ministers have been raising more questions than answers.

HEROIC WELCOME FOR PROFESSOR RUQQAYYA

Professor Rufai, the immediate past Minister of Education might not have been a "prophet" appreciated by President Goodluck Jonathan, but in Jigawa State where she hails from, the effusive demonstration of appreciation by the people on Friday September 13 struck quite an emotional chord in her.

Two days earlier, the Jigawa State Governor, Sule Lamido had announced his administration would be organizing a homecoming reception for Rufai at the Aminu Kano Triangle, Dutse. Lamido had nominated Rufai to Jonathan's ministerial cabinet. And many political analysts and followers of the raging crisis threatening the unity of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) were quick to read vindictiveness into the president's axe, as Lamido is a chieftain of the New Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) faction baring fangs against Jonathan and the PDP's leadership style.

A mammoth crowd turned out to honour the former minister. As early as 3pm, thousands of both men and women thronged the reception venue with banners of various inscriptions, chanting 'sai mama'. Rufai arrived the Aminu Kano Triangle in company of Governor Lamido and her husband, Dr Ahmed Rufai by 5pm. As soon as the crowd sighted their motorcade, it erupted into songs of 'sai Lamido,'sai mama', dancing all the way. Ruqayya could not hide her joy as she waved endlessly to the crowd, showing her appreciation.

Chairman of the occasion, Alhaji Umaru Zandam, described the former minister as "a woman whose star has just begun to shine." Zandam enthused: "We are here today in honour of our illustrious daughter of Jigawa State who has made Nigeria, Jigawa State, Governor Lamido and her family very proud. She is a testimony to that statement that what a man can do a woman can do better. History will vindicate your achievements in the Ministry of Education. Your achievements in the education sector will continue to speak for you. We are not surprised because you came from a sound parental background. We are proud of you".

After the chairman's speech, Professor Ruqqayya rose to express her gratitude to Allah, who she said had guided and protected her in the last three and a half years she served as education minister and Governor Lamido who stood by her and supported her

all the way.

"I thank Allah who used my leader, my governor to nominate me as a minister. I will, forever, remain grateful to Governor Sule Lamido for the confidence and faith he has in me. I never dreamt of becoming a minister. There are people who have been with the governor for a long time and yet he chose me, even though I had only worked closely with him not for long.

"I am happier today than when I was appointed a minister. I used to think of how I would end my tenure as minister. But seeing this mammoth crowd today, I say Alhamdulilah, I have ended well. I cannot thank my leader Governor Lamido and people of Jigawa state enough.

"Though some people may be surprised, I will like to extend my gratitude to President Goodluck Jonathan who had been very supportive throughout my stay as minister. This is the first time in recent history a minister of education had stayed in office for three and half years. Most of my predecessors stayed for one and half years or two years at most."

The former minister told the gathering that the reception was a testimony that she represented Jigawa State well. She thanked her husband, Dr Ahmed Rufai for his support and understanding while she was a minister. "Most husbands would not allow their wives to go out without knowing when they would return home," she said.

Expressing appreciation to President Jonathan for appointing Professor Rufai a minister, Governor Lamido said the Jigawa State people bore neither ill-feelings nor grudges against the former over Rufai's removal. "The president has not done any wrong by firing her and there is no political dimension to the sack, contrary to popular opinion. The president has the power to hire and fire," the governor asserted.

Although both Governor Lamido and Professor Ruqqayya, in their separate speeches, shied away from inferring bitter intra-party politics in President Jonathan's sack of the ministers, most public opinions believe current developments within the PDP and the ignominious manner of the dismissal of the ministers lend credence to vindictiveness.

Ismail Adebayo, Muideen Olaniyi, Abdullahi Anako and Abdulkadir Badsha Muktar and Isiaka Wakili